

OF
God Almighty's Providence
Both in the
SENDING and DISSOLVING
Great Snows & Frosts,
AND
The Improvement, we ought to make, of it.

A
SERMON,

Occasioned by the
Late Extreme Cold Weather,
Preached *in It to his Neighbours,*
And now thought fit to be made *more Public,*
for the *Common Good.*

By *Benj. Camfield*, Rector of *Aileston* near *Leicester*.

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To the READER.

ST. Paul speaks of *a πρὸ γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ*, somewhat considerable that may be known of God from the Book of his Creatures, and this with a competent degree of evidence and satisfaction, [*φανερὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς*] where men have nothing else but the light of common Reason to guide them. “For, saith he, “the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood [or considered] by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and God-head; so that they [the very Heathens] are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, [or, by this means might have known him] they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, Rom. i. xix-xxi. The Author therefore of the Book of Wisdom, deservedly proclaims: “Surely “vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant “of God, and could not out of the good things, “that are seen, know him that is; neither by considering the works, did acknowledge the Work-master, Chap. xiii. i. That is, as he proceeds, who did not collect and infer his surpassing Beauty, Power and Goodness, from the visible Prints and Images of those Divine Excellencies to be found in the Universe.

“He, saith the Son of Sirach, hath garnished

“ the excellent works of his wisdom: [*ἐνδοξασθῆναι*, not
 “ only ordered but adorned them; whence the
 “ world is called *κόσμος*.] And he is from ever-
 “ lasting to everlasting; unto him may nothing be ad-
 “ ded, neither can he be diminished: [Cui summum
 “ & proprium est, semper id esse, quod est.]
 “ And he hath no need of any Counsellor. O how de-
 “ rable are all his works, and that a man may see, even
 “ to a spark! [The least of them affording
 “ some glimmerings of his Majesty.] All these
 “ things live, [that is, exert their respective
 “ powers] and remain for ever for all uses;
 “ [whereto he hath appointed them] And they
 “ are all obedient [viz. to his Commands, or the
 “ Laws which he hath set them, Ps. cxix. xci.]
 “ Eccles. xlii. xxi-xxiii.

And this he prosecutes more particularly, Ch.
 xliiii. But I will only take notice of what may
 serve to illustrate the following Text and Dis-
 course, Ver. xliii. to xxii.

“ By his commandment he maketh the Snow to fall
 “ apace [Unget, accelerat nivem] And send-
 “ eth swiftly the lightnings of his judgment [that is,
 by which he is wont sometimes to execute his
 judgments, when he makes the Creature his
 weapon for the revenge of his enemies, &c.
 See Wisd. v. xvii, xx, xxii-xvi, xxiv.]

“ Through this [or, for this same end and
 “ purpose. Διὰ τοῦτο. Eiusdem iudicii exe-
 quendi

“quendi causâ] the Treasures [or Magazines
“of Heaven] are opened; and Clouds [charged
“as he pleaseth] flie forth as Fowl; [on the
“wing, with speed, Isa. lx. viii.] Madidis
Notus evolat alis.]

“By his great power he maketh the Clouds firm;
“[Condensat Nubes] And the Hail-stones are
“broken small. [As so many fragments or
shivers of a pellucid Rock of Chrystal.]

“* The noise of the Thunder maketh the earth to * Here fol-
“tremble, [or groan as a woman in her travail, low the Or-
saith the Margin; puts Nature as it were into an der of the
agony and labour by the fright of it. See Psal. best Copies;
xxix. viii, ix.] for in our
Translation
there is a

“At his sight the mountains are shaken: [Psal. Transpositi-
“civ. xxxii.] And at his will the South-wind blow- on. See Grot.
“eth; so doth the northern storm, and the whirlwind.

“As Birds flying he scattereth the [feather'd]
“Snow; And the falling down thereof, is as the
“lighting of Grasshoppers, [or Locusts; which
come in full and continued Swarms or Bands,
as it were, each one gently settling upon the ground.
See Prov. xxx. xxvii. Joel ii.]

“The eye marvelleth at the beauty of the white-
“ness thereof; [which is such, as dazleth us
“to look intensely upon it.] And the heart is
“astonished at the raining of it.

“The Hoar-frost also as Salt he poureth on the
“earth; And being congealed, it lieth on the top of
“sharp

“sharp stakes, [Or, it is, as the point of sharp
“stakes, saith the Margin. *Quasi quedam fasti-*
gia palorum. Velut Aculeorum cuspis. We call
them, Swords and Daggers.]

“When the cold North-wind bloweth [Aquilos
“nis Horrida Flabra, as the Poets express it.]
“And the water is congealed into Ice, it abideth
“upon every gathering together of water; [that is,
“the Rivers, as well as standing Pools.] And
“cloatheth the water, as with a Breast-plate, [or,
“Coat of Mail.]

“It devoureth the mountains, and burneth the wil-
“derness, and consumeth the grass, as fire; [that
is, it dries up the juice, and waists the verdure
of every green thing. *Penetrabile Frigus adurit.*
Torret hiems, say the Poets.]

“A present Remedy of all, is a Mist coming spee-
“dily; a dew coming after heat, [or, upon heat]
“refresheth; [that is, the warm Spring by its
Mists and Dews relieves us after a tedious
Winter.]

Thus far the Son of Sirach.

And, had this come to mind, before I had tran-
scribed the ensuing Sermon, I would have allotted
another place for it: But, since it did not, have
thought good however to recommend it here to
the Reader's perusal: And that is all the Enter-
tainment or Trouble I design to give him.

B. C.

OF
GOD ALMIGHTY'S PROVIDENCE

Both in

The { Sending
&
Dissolving } Great Snows and Frosts ;

AND

The Improvement , we ought to make, of it, &c.

Psalm CXLVII. xv, xvi, xvii, xviii.

“ He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth,
“ and his word runneth very swiftly.

“ He giveth snow like wool , and scattereth the
“ Hoar-frost like ashes.

“ He casteth forth his Ice like morsels. Who is
“ able to abide his Frost, [or cold] ?

“ He sendeth out his word , and melteth them : He
bloweth with his wind, and the waters flow.



These words are a most elegant Description
of God Almighty's providence in the Go-
vernment of the world, and disposing of
the seasons of it, especially in the send-
ing and Removing of Great Frosts and
Snows.

The Psalmist had touched, immediately before, upon
the

the Blessing of Peace and Plenty, which God had vouchsafed his Jerusalem. "He maketh Peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the Flower of Wheat; or the finest of the wheat." + The Hebrew hath it, The Fatness of Wheat. - And from hence He naturally proceeds to the more Immediate Causes of this fruitfulness and plenty, * (The Clouds that drop fatness) but all of them directed by the hand of Heaven, all of them depending upon the divine Command and Influence. "He sendeth forth his Commandment upon Earth, and his Word runneth very swiftly, &c. [*Summa celeritate perficiuntur, quæ jubet.*]" - Upon his bidding, it is, that the Earth yieldeth her increase, and Nature, with all her Auxiliaries, is at his powerful beck.

[* See Psal.
CIV. xiii, xiv,
xv.]

Natæblus.

In the Text it self we have, 1. A general Acknowledgment of God's over-ruling Providence. "He sendeth forth his Commandment upon earth, and his word runneth very swiftly. And 2. A particular Illustration or Exemplification of it, by way of Instance, both in the Giving and Removing great Snows and Frosts, with Hail and Ice. "He giveth Snow like wool; and scattereth the Hoar-frost like Ashes. "He casteth forth his Ice like Morfels. Who is able to abide his Frost? [or, who can stand before his cold?] He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: "He bloweth with his wind; [or, causeth his wind to blow] and the waters flow.

(I.) I say, A General acknowledgment of Gods over-ruling Providence throughout the world. "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, and his word runneth very swiftly. [*Mandat tantum, & Statim executio sequitur.*]" - He only calls, and all things answer him; he commands, and the Execution follows upon it. Thus, at first, "by the word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the host of them by the
"breath.

Sculcetius.

"breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the
 "Sea together, as an heap, and layeth up the Deep in
 "Store-houses, [*viz.* by the *same word of his mouth.*]
 "Let all the Earth fear the Lord, let all the Inhabi-
 "tants of the World stand in awe of him. For he
 "spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood
 "fast, *Psal. XXXIII. vi--x.* [*see Genes. I.*] His Al-
 mighty *Fiat* produced all things out of *nothing*. And
 by the *same* are they still *preserved*. "Upholding all
 "things by the word of his power, saith the *Apostle*,
Hebr. I.iii. and so are they also *Ruled and Governed*, as
 here we have it. "He sendeth forth his commandment
 "upon earth, and his word runneth very swiftly.
 This *sending forth his commandment*, is nothing else
 but that *hidden yet effectual way, whereby he orders all*
things. He no sooner *speaks*, gives out the *word of or-*
der, issues out his *Warrant and Commission*, but [*præsto*
ad parendum concurrunt omnia] all things are *at hand*
 upon it, ready to obey him, yea, *quick and nimble in*
their observance of him. "His word runneth very
 "swiftly. [*Verbo solo, quicquid vult, efficere potest.*]
 - By his word alone he can do every where, whatsoever
 he will.

calvin.

Munster.

And this (2.) he goes on to evidence and illustrate
 by examples; namely, by his sudden *sending of Great*
Snows and Frosts, with Hail and Ice, and as sudden
dissolving of them again, when he pleaseth. In the
 expressing of which he is very *Poetical*. We will take
 the *Particulars*, as they lie.

(i.) "He giveth *Snow* like *Wool*."] He turns the
 moist vapours of the Air into *white flakes of Snow*, which
 descend *silently*, and within a while lie a great thickness,
 as a *Fleece of wool* on the ground, wherewith it is no
 less *warmly clad, and nourished*, and defended from the
 biting winds, than the *sheep is by its wool*, or our bod-
 dies

[*Nix emula
 lana. Vellera
 nivis. Virg.*]

4)
ices by garments, made of it. Thus Snow hath, not only the colour and likeness, but the defensive and comforting properties of wool. It is not an injury, but a benefit to the Earth: And Rabbi Arama said, [Dies

Vicars De
caple, in loc.]

unus nivium prodest plus, quam quinque Dies pluvie.] One day of Snow doth more good, than Five of Rain.

(ii.) "He scattereth the Hoar-frost like ashes.]

Ibid.

[Vitrea cum
Terra pruina
Spargitur.]

+ [Instar Cineris] that is, as some of the Hebrew Doctors comment upon it, [Parum hic, parum illic.] Here a little, and there a little; or, (it may be) as we do ashes to dry up superfluous moisture in wet places. By his word the Frost comes, which he gently strews upon the surface of the Earth.

Dr. Patrick's
Par.]

[Lapideose
grandinis im-
ber.]

Dr. Hammond]

(iii.) "He casteth forth his Ice like morsels." [Tanquam Frusta.] Some refer it unto Hail-storms, q. d.

Sometimes he congeals the moist vapours into Ice, which he breaks, as it were, into bits, and throws down in a violent Hail. — Others, rather to the Freezing of the earth and waters, when the whole Surface is congealed into a firmness as strong as Chrystal, able to bear the greatest weight, and a multitude of pieces of Ice are scattered on the face of the ground, like morsels of bread, without any appearance of moisture in them:

+ which the Poets also are wont to express after a like manner, speaking in Great Frosts of Drinking morsels of Wine, swallowing it down by Gobbets: And whole Rivers stop'd in their course, as a Horse by his Reins; and standing with a thick Crust of hard Ice over them. Nay, and High-ways made by this means for Men and Horses, and Carriages on the Deeps, and standing Bridges erected, as it were, over the Great Waters. As Ovid phraseth it, speaking of the Cold upon Pontus.

[Nec hausta
meri, sed data
frusta bibunt.
Ovid.]
Glacie cursus
frenantur a-
quarum.]
Stabant jam
flumina duro
incrassata ge-
lu.] Id.

[Quoque

[*Quique rates ierant, pedibus nunc itur, & undas
Frigore concretas Ungula pulsât Equi.
Perque novos pontes, subter labentibus undis
Ducunt Sarmatici barbara plaustra boves.*]

— (iv.) It is added, “ who is able to abide his Frost ? or, “ who can stand before his Cold ?] such is sometimes the *severity of this pinching weather* ; such the *extremity of the cold*, that neither *Man* nor *Beast* on the Earth, nor *Birds* in the Air, nor *Fishes* in the Rivers are able to resist the Force of it, or long to support and endure under its assaults.---It stupifies and benumbs [Non tractabile Frigus.] all our senses, and stagnates our blood, and turns us almost into so many petrified monuments of its rigorous [Torpetque vincit frigidus sanguis gelu. &c.] fury. It cuts off Intercourse between Country and Country ; blocks up the Merchant and Mariners in the Haven, or (which is worse) starves them abroad at Sea ; It confines the Traveller from his journeys : It clogs the Mills, that they cannot Grind our Corn, and so produceth a kind of Dearth in the midst of abundance ; Nay, it converts our very Bread, and Meat, and Drink, into Stones : It retains the busie Husbandman within from his Field-work, and makes the very savage Creatures keep to their Hideing places. —And, though the more Northern Climates are usually more sensible of this, as the Inhabitants of Russia and Muscovie, who are put to all the Art they have to make Defensatives against it, yet, whensoever God pleaseth, he can call it also into the most temperate and warm Regions under Heaven ; as we have had of late some considerable Feeling of it.

— His hand, you see, is all along to be owned and observed in these things. “ He giveth the Snow. “ He scattereth the Hoar-frost. “ He casteth forth his “ Hail :

Hail or Ice. And it is " his Cold too." [†] [*Non fit, ex accidente*] as some of the *Jewish Expositors*, not amiss, gloss upon it. It comes not by chance or accident. It is wholly at his disposing.

And, as he *sends* these by his Command, upon whatsoever *Errands* he hath for them to dispatch, so he also *recalls* them, and *countermands* them at his pleasure.

This therefore (v.) is superadded in the *Close of all*; and *well it is for us, that so it is*. " He sendeth out " his Word, and melteth them: He bloweth with his " wind, [*or, causeth his wind to blow*] and the Waters " flow.

Buchanan.

† [*Quum libuit, molles glacies tabescit in undis :
Adspirat aura mitior, Rivi fluunt.*]

- To prevent the hurt and mischief, which might accrue by their *tedious or too long continuance*, when the motions of Nature have a violent restraint upon them by the *Weather*, and both Earth and Waters are *congealed* beyond the power of all *humane means* to dissolve them; He *issues out another Command*, which as suddenly makes a *desired Thaw*, and by the *warm breath of a Southern Wind* loosens the Waters which were so close bound up; causes the *Snow and Frost* and Ice *immediately to melt*, and full streams to come down upon the Valleys.

[*Solvitur acris
hiems frigora
nitescent Zephyris.* Horat.]

Thus he both *sends* and *recalls* these Creatures of his at his own will. And these are remarkable *Instances of his ordinary Providence*, common to the whole World, wherein *all men may see, how Wise and Powerful and Good he is*. There is enough in *these* to make him known unto *all men*. If they will but *open their eyes* to take notice of what is frequently done in their view. He speaks unto us all from the *Clouds above*

above, which he exhales and raiseth from the Earth and marvellously hangs in the Firmament, and dissolves into Rain or Dew, or else into Snow and Hail and Hoar-frost, which are but Rain and Dew congealed by the cold Air. "Who covereth the Heaven with Clouds, who prepareth Rain for the Earth. So the *Psalmist* had before expressed it, *verse* viii. and here he represents the *same Divine Power* turning that Vapour or Rain into Snow or Hail, or Hoar-frost and Ice, or Melting and Dissolving them again by his Winds. † Thus St. Paul and Barnabas preach to the Heathens at *Lystra*, *Acts* XIV. xvii. "He left not himself without witness in that he did good, and gave us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness. And so the Prophet *Jeremiah* speaks of this Dispensation, as a *convictive Testimony of God* unto men, *Ch.* XIV. xxii. "Are there any among the Vanities (or *Idols*) of the Gentiles, that can give Rain? or can the Heavens (of themselves) give Showres? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? (the only commander and giver of Rain and Showers) therefore we will wait upon thee; for thou hast made all these things. To which *same purpose* he had said also in another place, *ch.* X. xiii. "When he (that is God) uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of Waters in the Heavens; and he causeth the Vapours to ascend from the ends of the Earth; He maketh Lightnings with Rain, and bringeth forth the Winds out of his Treasures.— But this comes yet with a stronger force and conviction upon us, if unto the Vapours, Clouds, and Rain, and Winds, we add also his Snow, and Hail, and Frost, and Ice, as the *Psalmist* here doth; calling upon them by name among other of his Creatures to bless and praise him. — "Hail, and Snow, and Vapour, and stor-

"my Wind, fulfilling his word, *Psalme CXLVIII. viii.*

And there are *very many remarkable passages in the Book of Job to the like effect.* Thus *Elihu* there speaks of God, *ch. v.* "Who doth great things, saith he, and unsearchable things without number. --- And then the *first* he gives instance in is *this*, "Who giveth rain upon the Earth, and sendeth waters upon the Fields, *Ver. ix, x.*— And *Job* was not to be taught this Lesson. "He bindeth up the waters in his thick Clouds, *saith he*, and the Cloud is not burst under them. [That is, He keeps them a long time hanging, as it were, in *those bags*, through which they do not at length burst all at once, but distill by drops (*guttatim*, as through a Sieve or Cullender) to moisten the Earth in due season] *Chap. XXVI. viii.* And again, "He looketh to the ends of the Earth, and seeth under the whole Heaven, to make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure; when he made a Decree for the rain, and a way for the lightnings of thunder. [That is, Adjusting all their proportions, and appointing the course they shall take.] *Chap. XXVIII. xxiv, xxv.*— And yet *this* is that, which his friend *Elihu* afterwards more particularly recommends to his due observance, *Chap. XXXVI. xxiv, &c.* "Remember, that thou magnify his work, *saith he*, "which men behold. Every man may see it; men may behold it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his year be searched out. For he maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof; which the Clouds do drop and distill upon men abundantly. Also can any understand the spreadings (or *poissings*) [or *balancings*, *Chap. XXXVII. xvi.*] of the Clouds, or the noise of his Tabernacle? [That *Thunder* he means, which proclaims

claims him to dwell above ; of which he goes on to treat more at large in the *beginning of the next Chapter.*] — And then he adds , “ Great things doth he, “ which we cannot comprehend ; for he saith unto the “ snow , Be thou upon the earth ; likewise to the “ small rain, and to the great rain of his strength, *Ch. XXXVII. v. vi.* Upon which it follows , “ He saileth “ up the hand of every man, that all men may know “ his works, *Verse vii.* [which may very well be expounded to *this sense* , That by his Snow and Rain he stops the Labour of those whose business is abroad in the Fields , and makes them know , that he disposeth of the Weather as he pleaseth. *Agreeably whereunto he adds, ver viii.* “ Then the beasts also go into dens, and remain in their places.] --- Again saith he, *ver. x. &c.* “ Out of the south cometh the whirl-wind , and cold “ out of the north. [Namely by his order and appointment only.] “ By the Breath of God Frost is given, and “ the breadth of the Waters is straitned , [that is, They are pent and bound up so fast, that they cannot flow] “ Also by waterings he weareth the thick Cloud, “ he scattereth his bright Cloud, and it is turned about “ by his Counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the “ earth. He causeth it to come, whether for correction or for his land , or for mercy [that is , either to scourge our sins with plagues , or produce fruitfulness for the necessary sustenance of man and beast , or to reward the obedience of his servants with some extraordinary plenty and very healthful seasons.] — And God himself, in the XXXVIII. Chapter, approves of this kind of discourse, and takes the very same method to give Job a sensible representation of his own tremendous Majesty, *verse xxii. &c.* “ Hast thou enter’d, saith he, into the “ treasures of the Snow ? or, hast thou seen the trea-

See Dr. Parr's Paraphrase.

“sures of the Hail, which I have reserved against the
 * [See Exod. IX. xviii, &c.] “time of trouble, against the *day of battel and war* *?
 —“Hath the Rain a Father? Or who hath begot-
 “ten the Drops of the Dew? Out of whose womb
 “came the Ice? And the Hoar-frost of Heav’n who
 “hath gender’d it? The waters are hid as with a stone;
 “and the face of the deep is frozen.—And again,
Verse xxxiii, &c. “Knowest thou the Ordinances of
 “Heaven? Canst thou set the Dominion thereof in the
 “Earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
 “that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst
 “thou send lightnings, that they may go and say, Here
 “we are;] viz. *ready at thy beck and call*, as they are
 always at mine.—

All these Meteors (as we stile them) go and come at
 God’s bidding onely. “He sendeth forth his command-
 “ment upon earth; and his word runneth very swift-
 “ly.—Every Creature gives the word with all expe-
 “dition to its next fellow. And again, “He sendeth
 “out his Almighty word, and melteth them, &c. He
commands the Clouds, that they rain; and that they rain
not too, Isa. V. vi. “He withholdeth the waters, and
 “they dry up; Also he sendeth them out, and they
 “overturn the Earth, *Job XII. xv.*

But I pass on now to *what I principally aim at*, which
 is, to give you those *useful and important Lessons*, we are
 every one to take out from this matter of common know-
 ledge and observance.

I. Then from hence we learn, *Not to attribute these*
notable Effects of God’s Providence to Chance or Blind
Fortune; nor yet so to ascribe them to any natural *Cau-*
ses, as to leave God out of our Philosophy. ’Tis certainly
 preposterous, vain and wicked so to do; for all *Se-*
cond Causes necessarily suppose the *First*, and depend
 upon him in all their motions. The whole link of Na-
 ture’s

ture's Chain of Causes and Operations is bound to *his Throne*, who gives influence, and sets Rules and Measures to them all. Nay, I will add, there is *no Reasonable account at all to be given of any of these Things*, which we daily converse with, see, and behold, (*no solving of these ordinary Phænomena*) without recourse had unto God as *chief and principal*.

And *strange it is*, that so great a part of the World should be yet *stupid* amidst so many miraculous *Testimonies of the Divine Being and Presidency*. Whereas, we ought certainly, as *Elihu exhorteth Job*, to "stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God, *Ch. XXXVII. xiv.* and to *magnifie*, praise, and adore him, in and for them all, *Chap. XXXVI. xxiv.* We should cry out with the *Psalmist*, "O Lord our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the world! *Psal. VIII.* And again, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all, *Psal. CIV.* And yet again, "O Lord, how glorious are thy works! "Thy thoughts are very deep. An unwise man doth not well consider this, and a fool doth not understand it, *Psal. XCII. v, vi.* Therefore are they all *call'd upon to praise God*, because they afford us so much *matter, occasion, and motive* so to do continually. They are the *standing and universal witnesses of his infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness* in the world: They are the *natural Preachers of Divinity*, whose voice is *every where to be heard*, declaring the *glory of God*, and shewing *his handy work*, as the *Psalmist* speaks particularly of the *Heavens and Firmament, with the stars of light*, *Psal. XIX.* "There is neither Speech nor Language, but their Voice is heard among them; Their sound is gone out to all Lands, and their words to the ends of the world. We may say of *them* therefore, "God gave the Word; great was the company of Preachers, *Psal.*

Psal. lxxviii. And, among the other works of God, we call more particularly, in the *Benedicite*, to these Me-
teors, to bleſs and praise, and magnifie him for ever.
“ O ye *showrs and dews!* — “ O ye *winds of God!* —
“ O ye *Winter and Summer!* — “ O ye *Froſts and*
“ *Cold!* — “ O ye *Ice and Snow!* Bleſs ye the Lord,
“ praise him and magnifie him for ever. Which kind of
language (by way of *Address to insensible Creatures*)
whoever are offended at, must first blame the Holy
Penman, who set the Copy of it, *Psal. Clxxviii. viii.* as
I before quoted it; And again, *Psal. Ciii. ult.* “ O speak
“ good of the Lord all ye works of his in all places of
“ his Dominion!

We see, (as *Clarius* notes upon the Text) what occa-
sions devout and pious men take of praising God; and
yet blockish and ungrateful worldlings, amidst all this
plenty of Instances, can think of nothing to extort
and exercise their Religion and Thankfulness.

II. We learn from hence, not to murmur and com-
plain, or Repine at whatsoever comes to pass; for, in so
doing, we challenge God foolishly; * or Impute Folly
and weakness to him. We Blaspheme his Sovereignty,
and call his Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness into que-
stion.

[* Job I.
xxii.]

And yet This is the Fault, which querulous mortals
are, every where almost, too prone unto. ‘ If the
‘ weather be hot, saith *Sabrian*, we complain of Drought;
‘ if Rainy, of Deluge and inundation; If the year be Un-
‘ fruitful, of Dearth and Scarcity; If fruitful, of
‘ Cheapness. — And so, If it be cold and piercing, of Bit-
ter Blasts and Winds, &c. — Every one so acts and speaks,
as if he himself could order things better than they are.

De Gub. Dei.

But herein we do only betray our own Ignorance and
Rashness, sottishness and impiety. We judge of Things
false

fully, by their present appearance, and out-side only, and not by that Reference or Relation which one Thing hath unto another, and all have as parts, to the Good and Benefit of the whole.

We would, in some odd moods, have *no Winter*, or the *least that may be of it*; and so should have but *barren and unhealthful Springs and Summers too*. As the *Heathen Pliny* said wisely, 'He who prays for none but *warm and serene Winters* [*Non pro Arboribus vota facit*]' makes *no Good wishes for the Trees*: no, nor the *Fruits of the Earth*, or the *Inhabitants of it* either.

Could we once see it, we are infinitely better under the Conduct and Government of *God's Providence*, than we could possibly be at our own or other mens choice. 3

3. 2

III. We Learn from hence, to be deeply humbled in the sense of our own Ignorance of *God Almighty's works*, and That *Infinite wisdom and power*, whereby they are contrived and managed. The more we discern of *God's Majesty in them*, the more we shall see also of our own *vileness and imperfection*; and how unreasonable it is, for us to take upon our selves peremptorily to determine of them, which are all beyond our Grasp and comprehension. When *Job* had spoken sundry Great Things of *God*, he adds, "These are parts of his ways: "But how little a portion is heard of him; but the "Thunder of his power who can understand? chap. xxvi. xiv. q. d. These are but a small parcel of his works. For alas! It is very little indeed, that such as we, can understand of him; but the utmost Force of his power is quite out of our ken.

But then, if we are posed in these vulgar Things, which every were affect our Senses, how absurd and pre-

presumptuous is it for us to *pry boldly into more hidden mysteries*, or take upon our selves to *contradict any of the Divine Revelations concerning them!* “Canst thou by searching find out God? *saieth Zepar well.* “Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? “It is as high as Heaven; what canst Thou do? Deeper “than Hell; what canst thou know? The measure “thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than “the Sea. *Job. XI. vii, viii, ix,* That is, Thou maist as as well go about to *take the measure of the height of Heaven, or the Depth of Hell, the length of the Earth, or Breadth of the Sea,* as think to comprehend the *Reasons of God's Doings.* Nay, all *These* have their certain *Bounds and Limits*; but *He hath none.*

We shall do well to *make an Essay, and try our selves first with the Resolving of the meanest of these common Instances*, which are about us, before we presume upon those, which are more *Remote and Hidden.* And by *this very means* God himself *silenceth* Job, shewing of him, that *He, who found himself Gravel'd and Non-plus'd in accounting for the meanest of his visible works,* should not dare to *penetrate into the wisdom of his secret Counsels*; convincing him all along of his ignorance and weakness, by shewing him, how little he understood of the most *obvious* Things of the world.— And thus also our *Blessed Saviour* deals with *Nicodemus*, *St. John III.* “Tho the wind bloweth, where it “*listeth, saith he,* and thou hearest the sound thereof, “but canst not tell, whence it cometh, and whither it “goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.— “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not; “how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?

“Teach us (*saieth Elihu, in a due sense of humane infirmity and blindness*) what we shall say unto him; “for

"for we cannot order our speech by reason of Dark-
 "ness. Fair (or Cold) weather cometh out of the
 "North : with God is Terrible Majesty. Touching
 "the Almighty, we cannot find him out. He is ex-
 "cellent in power and in plenty of Justice, Job
 "XXXVII. xix. &c.

Let me here put you in mind therefore of the coun-
 sel of the wise son of Sirach ; " Seek not out the
 " things, that are too hard for thee ; neither search
 " the things which are above thy strength ; but, what
 " is commanded thee, think thereupon with reve-
 " rence. For it is not needful for thee to see with
 " thine eyes the things that are in secret. Be not cu-
 " rious in unnecessary matters ; for more things are
 " shewed to thee, than men understand. For many
 " are deceived by their own vain opinion, &c. Eccles.
 III. xxi. &c. — And then add that of the Author of
 the Book of Wisdom, " What man is he that can know
 " the Counsel of God ? or, Who can think, what
 " the Will of the Lord is ? For the thoughts of mor-
 " tal men are miserable, and our devices are uncertain.
 " For the corruptible Body presseth down the soul ;
 " and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the
 " mind, that museth upon many things. And hardly
 " do we guess aright at things, that are upon earth,
 " and with labour do we find the things, that are be-
 " fore us. But the things, that are in heaven, who
 " hath searched out ? And thy Counsel who hath
 " known, except thou give Wisdom, and send thy
 " Spirit from above ? Wisd. IX. xiii. &c.

There is more edifying and useful Truth and Phi-
 losophy (which indeed should never be made two di-
 stinct things) in saying, that God bringeth the Rain,
 and Hail, and Snow, and Winds out of his Treasures
 (his to us unknown and unsearchable Magazines or

Store-houses) than in any particular reasons we can otherwise assign of them without or besides him.

IV. We learn from hence farther , *Not to expect or look for any settled or fixed state of affairs, to last and abide long with us in a world that is continually uncertain and mutable, liable to such variety of changes from his Almighty Word* , who presides and governs all things in it.

He trains us up , by the *very course of his Providence* , to look and provide continually for *Changes* ; even by the *circular Revolution of the several Seasons of the year* , and the manifold difference , which we feel and experience time after time in those Seasons. The *Spring* introduceth *Summer* , and *Summer* *Autumn* , and *Autumn* *Winter* ; and then *Winter* again is succeeded by the *more welcome Spring*, &c. But we have a strange *Interchange* sometimes of *Winterly weather with our Summers* , and *Summer-weather again with our Winters*.—— “ The day is thine, and the night “ is also thine, *saieth the Psalmist* ; thou hast prepared “ the Light and the Sun, (that is, the *Moon* and *Sun*) “ thou hast set all the borders of the Earth ; thou “ hast made them *Summer* and *Winter*. *Psal. LXXIV. xvi, xvii.* “ The Heavens are thine ; the Earth also is “ thine, Thou hast made the North and the South, *Psal. LXXXIX. xii, xiii.*

Which if we would *allegorize* , the *Preacher* tells us , That “ God hath set the day of Prosperity and “ Adversity over against each other, that man should “ find nothing after him. *Eccles. VII. xiv.* That is, *Nothing justly to blame or amend in God's works* ; and yet be at continual uncertainty what shall befall him, that he may live the rather in a *submissive Dependence upon him* , who orders all according to the Counsel of his own

own Will; even all things in *Measure, Number and Weight*, with the greatest *Skill and Exactness*, though we *know it not*, or cannot give an *account of it*. Good is *set against evil*; and *Life against Death*: Yea, "Look upon all the works of the most High (*saieth the son of Sirach*) and there are two and two one against another. *Eccles. XXXIII. xiv, xv. And again,* "All things are double one against another, *saieth he,* "and he hath made nothing imperfect: But one thing "establisheth the good of another, *Ch. XLII. xxiv, xxv.*

V. Therefore, we are from hence trained up, *in the midst of our greatest Serenity and Happiness*, in our *summer days of Prosperity*, to be *moderate and sober*; considering, how we, and all we have, and are related to, are at the Disposal of the *sovereign Ruler* among the Children of men; "Who sendeth forth his Commandment upon Earth, and his Word runneth very "swiftly: who can *soon blacken our Skie with Clouds*, and from thence send forth his *Artillery of Snow, and Hail, and Rain and Cold* upon us.--- This also is well expressed by the *son of Sirach*. "When thou hast enough, "remember the time of Hunger; and when thou art "Rich, think upon Poverty, and Need; from the "morning unto the evening the time is changed; and "all things are *soon done before the Lord*.—— That is, "His Word runneth very swiftly. *Eccles. XVIII. xxv, xxvi.*

Who knows how *soon* our halcyon dayes may be turned into a *Tempest*, our Peace into *Troubles*, our Plenty into *Want and Scarcity*; our Liberty into *Thralldom*; our Health into *Sickness*; and our Life it self into the *Shades of Death*?

VI: By the *same instances* we are also caution'd against *Impatience and Despair* in the time of our Adversity.

Against *Impatience* under that hand, which there is no *controuling* or *resisting* of; no *strugling with*, or *striving against*; [ineluctabile fatum] that *All-commanding Hand*, which *wounds and alone can heal us*. And then.

Against *Despair* too in the worst of Conditions that can befall us; for there is *nothing too hard for God to alter and remove*, * with *less Trouble and Difficulty than we speak a Word*. Be the Season never so *rigorous and extreme*, so that we are not able to hold up long under it, yet he can *send out his Word and dissolve all into Softness*; blow upon the *frozen Ice* with his *south wind*, and make the *waters flow again out of the Rock*. He can *hush and lay the stormy Tempest*, or turn it into a *Calm*, our *Night* into *Day*, our *Calamity* and *Sorrow* into *Joy and Gladness*. He can *act*, what to *us* looks very like a *Contradiction and Repugnance*; make the *cold and chilling Snow* to *warm the Earth*, and *feed it with his Ice*, as *morsels of Bread*. He can *bring sweet out of bitter* to us. The *same vapours* he can turn (and daily doth) into *contrary appearances*; even into *moist and fluid Rain*, or into *hard and stony Ice*, like *Chrystal*, or else into *soft and yielding Snow*.

Let us not therefore forget the *Exhortation*, or *Consolation*, [for the word *Deus meus* signifies both, and both indeed it is] which speaketh unto us, as *children*; "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; "nor faint, when thou art rebuked of him, *Hebr.* XII. v.

[* Sperat infestis, metuit secundis alteram sortem bene preparatum pectus. Informes hiemes reducit Jupiter: Idem si numeret: non si male nunc, olim scierit.--] Horat.]

VII. From *hence* we may learn the *monstrous and unaccountable Vanity* of profane men, who can ever think to thrive in the world, without God's leave and blessing : When as it is plain, that , not only we our selves subsist by him, live and move and have our being in him ; Live not by Bread alone , but by every Word of God : But the very common means of our Subsistence, depend altogether and entirely upon him ; upon his Smiles , to vouchsafe, secure, and succeed them, or upon his Frowns, to disappoint and deprive us of them , or blast them to us, and render them ineffectual.

There are a great many things , that go to the upholding of us in the world : And we can have none of them all, unless he please ; nor any of them longer, than he please ; nor can any of them do us good further, than he please to bless it. We too much verifie the vulgar Emblem of Swine feeding upon Acorns on the Ground, without looking up to the Tree that scatters them. We are maintain'd by God's heavenly Bounty, but consider not, as we ought, the invisible Hand in the Clouds, that dispenseth all unto us. We pore only upon the Crop before us, without thinking, how many Causes and Circumstances the Production of it is owing to. We consider not how the Earth must bear the Corn and Grass, and the Heavens also bear the Earth ; and the God of Heaven and Earth prosper both. 'Tis he, that must open the Windows of Heaven, and pour us out a Blessing from thence, that we may have a Sufficiency or Plenty of all necessities, Malachi III. x.

This is the sense and importance of that excellent Psalm, [Psal. Cxxvii.] " Except the Lord build the House, the Workman buildeth in vain. Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman also waketh in vain. And, so in like manner, " all the rest of our toil
" and

“and labour is in vain, unless he speed the Plough, and give the increase.

Of all sorts of men in the world, the Husbandman, one would think, (and consequently indeed all others, who are some way or other beholding to him: for “the profit of the earth is for all; the King himself is served by the Field, Eccles. v. ix.) But of all others, I say, the Husbandman should be Religious, whose livelihood and success doth all along so visibly depend upon God Almighty's Providence. St. James tells us of his patience, and he recommends it for a pattern worthy of imitation. “Behold the Husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early, and the later rain, Chap. v. vii. — And he should be as exemplary for a continual devotion God-wards, who alone can prosper him.

And this hath been always the Piety of good men, to utter their good wishes for themselves and one to another, by directing them still to Heaven for the success. Whence is that of the Psalmist, “Prosper thou the work of our hands upon us. O prosper thou our handy-work, Psal. xc. And again, “Neither do they, which go by, say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the Name of the Lord, Psal. cxxix.

Now, let none tell me here, that some thrive as well, who seldom or never call upon God for it. For these are instances of his patience and long-suffering only. But they have nothing to trust to, that so they shall. They take not the right way and method for it. And, when Adversity befalls them, (as frequently it doth) they have the sense of their own guilt to double and increase it; wrath with their sickness, &c.

Eccles. v. xvii.

VIII How dreadful a thing must it needs be, to provoke

voke God to be our *Enemy*, upon whom we not only have *so close and near a dependance*, but who is *so formidable for strength and power*! He is a *terrible Enemy* indeed, who can, when ever he please, *cut off all Recruits and Succors from us, stop all Reliefs, starve and pine us out with hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness*. Nay, and he hath *many terrible Hosts of strong ones*, whom we cannot brave it out against, at *his beck and command*; "Snow and Hail, and Storm" and Tempest, all fulfilling of his word; prospering and succeeding to what end soever he *commissions* them. And who is able to abide his *Thunderbolts*, or his *Frost*? His *scorching heat*, or *pinching cold*?

Now, If we are not able to *stand before his cold*, which is but *one of that numerous Militia*, ready prest for his service, how shall we ever bear up against himself? As he reasons with Job upon that formidable Instance (which is but a *single Instance* too of his power) the great and stupendious *Leviathan* in the waters (the *Whale* or *Crocodile*) *Job xli. x.* "None is so fierce, that dare stir him up. Who then is able to *stand before me*? q. d. If *one of my Creatures* is so terrible, how dangerous then must it be to provoke *my Majesty*! "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? *saith the Apostle.* "Are we stronger than he? *1 Cor. x. xxii.* Sure we are *not in our right senses*, if so we do, or think, "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. Who hath hardned himself against him, and hath prospered? *Job ix. iv.* And, as it follows a little after, "If he will not withdraw his anger, the *proud helpers*, do stoop under him. [None can ever relieve us against him, vaunt he never so much of his prowess, or have we never so high a conceit and opinion of him.] *Verse xiii.* "Should not therefore his excellency make us afraid, and his dread fall upon us? *as it is, Chap. xiii.*

xiii. xi. Alas! the *leaf* may better resist the *wind*, and the *dry stubble* the *raging fire*, than any *mortal* contend with *him*, *Ver. xxv.* — “The earth shall tremble at the look of him. If he do but touch the mountains, they shall smoke. — So the *Psalmist* represents the *glorious majesty* of that *God*, “who decketh himself with light as with a garment; and spreadeth out the heavens like curtains; who layeth the beams of his chambers in waters, and maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind, &c. *Psalm. Civ.*

’Tis *madness* in us to continue in *rebellion* against and *despance* of such an *Enemy* as he is, the *Almighty Lord* of so many mighty *Hosts*. And, upon the same account,

IX. It must needs be our best policy and greatest wisdom, to yield and submit our selves betimes unto him; forthwith to seek peace and reconciliation and agreement with him, that he may be our Friend, and we his Favourites: As the men of Tyre and Sidon, we read, desired to make peace with Herod, “because their Country was nourished by the King’s Country, *Acts XII. xx.* But, what a contemptible thing was Herod’s displeasure, had he contrived them the worst Revenge he could, compared unto God’s?

“What King going to war against another King “(saith our Blessed Saviour) sitteth not down first, “and consulteth, whether he be able with Ten Thousand to meet him that cometh against him with Twenty Thousand? (that is, double his number) or else, “while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an “Embassage, and desireth Conditions of Peace, *St. Luke XIV. xxxi, xxxii.* But we, alas! (such is our weakness) have not so much as Unites to oppose his Myriads, and

and Thousands of Thousands, his Numberless Legions with;
 And he is not a great way off from us neither, but *always at hand, encompassing all our ways.* Nevertheless (such is His pity and compassion towards us) He *himself* [II Cor. V. xx.] *makes us gracious overtures of Peace and amity.* And therefore we are strangely besotted, if we do not forthwith *close with and accept them;* yea, if we do not press earnestly and speedily, that the Articles of Agreement between us may be signed and sealed, that we may henceforward become his *Allies and Confederates.*

For then we shall have as much *Comfort from hence,* as otherwise it speaks dread and terror to us. Then may we at all times *encourage our selves with David, in the Lord our God;* and make his name a strong Tower to betake our selves unto for safety and security. The Blessing of the Omnipotent God of Salvation will be then upon us. This we find to have been the Churches Confidence. “God is our Refuge, and strength, a very present Help in Trouble: Therefore will we not Fear. The Lord of Hosts is with us: The God of Jacob is our Refuge, Psal. XLVI. Even, the Almighty God, who Creates and Governs all things with his word only.

This is the Use, which God makes of his Almighty power; to “set up the Meek, and bring down the ungodly down to the ground; as it is before the Text, verse vi. and again verse xi. “His delight is in them that fear him, and put their Trust in his mercy.—And we have evidence enough, that he is never at a loss to succour and relieve, protect and bless his Faithful Servants, whom he delighteth in; whether by means, or without means, or through unlikely and contrary means. [Vide Sculter. in Loc.]

[*Per media.*] He can fill many Thousands with a few Loaves and Fishes only. So Christ sent forth his word, that is, commanded those Loaves and Fishes to be multiplied; And "his word ran very swift'y; so that all the Multitude eat of them and were satisfied, and many Baskets of Fragments were yet left.

[*Sine Mediis.*] So, when the Israelites in the Desert had neither Bread to Eat, nor Water to Drink, nor Flesh, according to their Appetite; God sent but forth his word, and the Clouds above rained Manna, and the Rock below gushed out Water; and the Wind brought them Quails in abundance.

[*Contrariis Mediis.*] So Elias in scarcity was fed by the Raven, a Bird of Prey bringing him Meat; And Jonah swallowed up, and preserved and cast safe on Shore by a Greedy Whale.

"Ascribe ye Power to the God of Israel, with the
"Psalmist: His Worship and Strength is in the Clouds,
"O God, wonderful art thou in thy holy places,
"even the God of Israel! He will give Strength and
"Power unto his people. Blessed be God, *Psal. LXVIII.*
xxxiv, xxxv.

X. How well grounded is the Piety of our Church, which sends us upon all occasions to that God from whom all good things do come, for all the Blessings we at any time want; and sends us back again also to him with our Thanksgivings for whatsoever we receive. Here is the Foundation of all our Collects for Rain, or Fair-weather;

weather ; for the averting of Famine or Scarcity , and vouchsafing us Plenty in the room of it. For Succour amidst Storms and Tempests at Sea. For Healthful and Fruitful Seasons. “ That he would give and preserve “ unto us the kindly Fruits of the Earth , so as in due “ time we may enjoy them, &c. — Here is the ground both of our Prayers and Doxologies. And this is the chief Design of our Rogation days , whereto the Homilies then appointed are very agreeable.*

* The doctrine of which is, That all good things do come from God ; as the collect also for that season doth recognize.

Lastly, To conclude all, *This Doctrine of Divine Providence, as it is laid down before us, is indeed a School and Nursery of universal Vertue, with reference to our selves, and others, and towards God himself.*

I. With reference to *our selves*, in that all things are so managed by God, as to train us up to the Exercise of all manner of Prudence and Fore-cast, and good Husbandry, in making seasonable Provisions for a future Supply, and demeaning our selves with all honest Care and Circumspection, that neither in our Health, nor Estate, we suffer Prejudice through our Idleness, Sloth, or Inconsiderateness. It reads us over the wise mans Lecture, Prov. VI. vi. &c. “ Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise : which having “ no Guide, Overseer, or Ruler, provideth her Meat “ in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest. — There is no such ingenious Tutor of all sorts of Prudence as Necessity. [Quis expeditur Psittacusuum *χαίρει?* Magister artis, ingenique largitor, venter.]

Persius.

II. Next, as to *others*, it trains us up to all the *bowels of Compassion and Charity*, in consulting, what we can, for their *Indigence and Infirmities*, to help and enable them to *support themselves and Families under those pinching Extremities*, which do sometimes attend the Season of the year : *With Dorcas to make Coats and Garments for the poor Widows*, *Acts IX. xxxix.* And, *with the hospitable Barbarians at Melita*, to shew all possible *Kindness to ship-wrack'd Strangers*, *kindling them a Fire, and taking them into shelter*, *because of the present Rain and Cold.* As *St. Paul* records that lovely instance of *heathen Goodness and Humanity*, *Acts XXVIII. i, ii.* ——— How great a *Charity and Beneficence* is it to contribute towards the *Relief of the necessitous*, in *Fewel and Cloths*, and *Harbour*, as well as *Food*, to render the bitter winter tolerable! ——— And

III. It trains us up, especially, to the *religious Fear and Obedience of God.*

“ Let all the earth fear the Lord, *saith the Psalmist*, “ let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of “ him : as I *quoted it before*, and that from a like Topic, *Psalms XXXIII.* And he takes notice, whether we make that use of our Reason, as we should, to infer this Duty from hence, and lets us know how ill he resents it, if we do not so. Witness that Complaint against his people for this neglect, *Jerem. V. xxiv.* “ Neither say they “ in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, “ who giveth us Rain, the former and the latter Rain “ in its season, and reserveth to us the appointed “ Weeks

"Weeks of the Harvest.— That is, *Who crowneth the year with his Goodness*; feedeth us with the *Fat of Wheat*; and for the Production of that, *commands the Clouds and Seasons, &c.*

But, This is not *all*, I would here suggest; *This farther offers it self to our Thoughts.* That it is *highly Reasonable* we should learn Obedience to *Him, whose commands all Things else so readily obey.* Even, - "Snow, "and Hail, and Ice; Storm and Tempest, fulfilling "his word.

We should therefore learn Obedience from them, that we be not *Heteroclites and Exceptions from the rest of the Creation*; unto whom it might be expected, that we, who are in a *Form above them*, should rather *set a good Example.* And we should learn this Obedience *the more*, because, what in them is *Necessity* only, may in us be a *Vertue*, and a *Vertue highly* to be rewarded from our Lord and Masters Bounty.—And *still the more*, because the *Ties of Gratitude* are upon us. We are obliged to pay this *Tribute of Thankfulness* to him, whom all Things else obey for our *Benefit and Welfare*, to maintain us in Health, and Strength, and Chearfulness, that we may do him service; And that *without anxious and diffident cares for our own Provision*; what we shall *Eat*; and what we shall *Drink*, and wherewith we shall be *cloathed*: Since the Lord, we serve, is both able and willing to *supply us with all these Necessaries*; Being such in power and Wisdom, and Goodness, as we have heard him described.

"Who sendeth his commandment upon Earth, and
"his word runneth very swiftly: who giveth Snow like
"wool,

“ wooll, and scattereth the Hoar-frost like Athes;
 “ who casteth forth his Ice, like Morfels; so that none
 “ is able to withstand his cold: who sendeth out his
 “ word again, and melteth them; bloweth with his
 “ South Wind, and the Waters flow.

Now, unto this *Supreme All-perfect Being*, the *Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the world*, the Almighty and Everlasting God, *who Governs all Things both in Heaven and Earth*, be ascribed by us, as is most due, All Honour and Glory, and Praise, and Adoration, with *Thanksgiving*, and Obedience, for ever and ever. Amen.

The E N D.

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